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SUBJECT: FORCES NOUVELLES SPOKESMAN DISCUSSES DISARMAMENT
ISSUES

REF: A) ABIDJAN 870 B) ABIDJAN 878

Classified By: PolEcon Chief Silvia Eiriz for reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Moussa Dosso, who headed the Forces Nouvelles (FAFN) delegation that met with President Gbagbo on Dec. 9, told Ambassador that the FPI wants a truncated disarmament process which is unacceptable to the FAFN. Dosso said that after 5-6 years of loyal service, the FAFN cannot ask its soldiers to go home empty-handed or with a token payment; training and/or social reinsertion programs are essential. Dosso acknowledged that the main impediment is financing and announced that joint customs teams would begin operating in January 2009. The revenue collected will be shared by the FAFN and the government. Dosso dismissed FPI allegations of widespread fraud in the north as a political ploy to discredit the identification process and said that FPI President Affi N'Guessan could not have made provocative public statements on disarmament without Gbagbo's approval. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Ambassador met December 11 with Moussa Dosso, Minister of Technical Education and Vocational training, and a senior spokesman for the Forces Nouvelles, to get a readout on the FAFN's meeting with President Gbagbo and to discuss implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement (OPA). Following the December 9 meeting with Gbagbo, Dosso told the press that the incident between the FPI and the FAFN (see reftels) was "closed", but he explained to Ambassador that this did not mean that the two had resolved their differences. According to Dosso, the FPI wants the FAFN to simply lay down their arms and go home. And despite the fact that the OPA calls for the creation of a new army, the FPI continues to talk about 'reintegration' of FAFN elements into the existing national army (the FANCI).

FAFN SATISFIED WITH OPA PROCESS

¶3. (C) Dosso told Ambassador that the FAFN had three goals when the rebellion was launched in 2002: 1) a fair identification process; 2) free and fair elections; and 3) a new, republican army. An identification process that the FAFN has so far found acceptable is underway, as are preparations for elections. Overall, the FAFN is satisfied that the crisis-resolution process envisioned in the OPA is bearing fruit. Creating a new army is the last hurdle. Dosso pointed to Section III of the OPA, which states: "The parties, signatories to the Agreement, aware of the fact that the national army must be the symbol of unity and cohesion of the nation and the guarantor of stability of the institutions on which the Republic stands, are committed to engage in a restructuring and revision of the two armed forces, with a view to setting up new defense and security forces committed to the values of integrity and republican morality." He stressed that President Gbagbo and the FPI could not reject the need to create a new army without jeopardizing the entire OPA.

¶4. (C) For the moment, however, the FAFN's focus is on disarmament. A thorough DDR (demobilization, disarmament and reintegration) process is critical to the peaceful resolution of the crisis, Dosso warned. Without it, millions of young

men will have no prospects and no hope for the future and will become a severe problem for the country. Dosso, who as Minister of Technical Education and Vocational Training, has a direct role to play in the process, said his Ministry has technical and professional centers nationwide where FAFN elements could be sent for training. There is no real need, he admitted, to build training centers purely for the DDR process. Dosso said he has discussed this option with UN agencies working in Cote d'Ivoire as well as with the IOM (International Organization for Migration). Financing for the process is the only obstacle. Dosso confirmed that DDR is one of the issues currently under discussion with the presidential camp and is likely to be addressed in the fourth supplementary agreement to the OPA.

FAFN READY TO SHARE REVENUE AND POWER IN THE NORTH

¶ 15. (C) Ambassador shared with Dosso concerns raised by FPI President N'Guessan about the need for government authority to be restored in the north to ensure a fair identification process. Dosso was adamant that these concerns are baseless, pointing out that all of the prefects and sub-prefects have returned to their jobs, as have a majority of other civil servants. The problem, he said, is not that the ComZones or FAFN impede them from doing their work, but the fact that the government has not been able to give their own representatives the resources they need to be effective. Dosso questioned the government's competence in terms of carrying out the redeployment of its authority, noting that a committee set up solely for this purpose (the CNPRA) has not been given a budget to carry out its assignment.

¶ 16. (C) Minister Dosso volunteered that to help resolve financing issues, joint customs teams, composed of government and FAFN elements, will begin operating in January 2009. Dosso said that Finance Minister Diby has already agreed that the revenue collected will be shared by the government and the FAFN. According to Dosso, the FAFN already uses most of its resources to cover food and lodging for its troops. Once the joint customs operation is underway, a priority for the FAFN will be regularize (register, license, and inspect) all vehicles brought into the north since the rebellion began. Revenue from this operation will be used to help pay demobilized troops the 90,000 CFA they have been promised. Dosso was confident that the FAFN would have no problem 'retiring' the Comzones once a complete disarmament process was assured.

WIDESPREAD FRAUD IN THE IDENTIFICATION PROCESS IS A FANTASY

¶ 17. (C) Returning to the FPI's war of words with the FAFN over disarmament, Dosso said that FPI allegations that there is widespread fraud in the north are a fabrication. At the Dec. 9 meeting with President Gbagbo, three key officials confirmed that they had no evidence of massive fraud in the north. According to Dosso, the Head of the Gendarmerie, General Kassarate, said that not a single case of fraud had been brought to his attention. The Director General of the Police, Gen. Brindou, said the same thing. The President of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) and the head of the INS (National Institute of Statistics) said that the incidence of fraud in the north was no higher in areas under FAFN control than elsewhere in the country. Dosso said it was possible that some FAFN elements had encouraged, even pushed, residents to register but he said it was clear that fraud is not a major problem.

¶ 18. (C) Comment: The Forces Nouvelles have always said that they would not disarm before the identification/ election process was largely completed because they do not trust the Gbagbo administration to follow through without the threat of military pressure. Minister Dosso's argument that the FAFN also cannot disarm until they can provide hope for the future to their soldiers is credible (the Ministry recently completed a study that puts the number of unemployed youth nationwide at 4 million, or one fifth of the population). No

one believes that the FAFN is using most of its resources to support its troops, and it is well known that the Comzones continue to have de-facto control of the north despite the presence of civil authorities. Divisions and resentments within the Forces Nouvelles have probably made it critical than ever for the FAFN to give each soldier something more lasting and potentially useful than a cash payment. Dosso's solution of using the revenue garnered from legalization of motor vehicles is an innovative one. If the Finance Minister has agreed to this scheme, as well as to a joint customs collection and revenue retention operation, we may soon see the process advance to a new level. End Comment.

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